

Daily Assignment

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Sunday, October 31, 2010

Daily Assignment #17: Thinking Skills, what are they?

We hear so much about teaching "Thinking Skills." I'm sure everyone has heard of Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking Skills: <http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic69.htm>. There is also Deborah Burn's Taxonomy of Thinking Skills: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/sem/typeiips.html>

Bottomline, this is my definition, "Thinking Skills" are the higher level learning objectives that teachers' design for students within a lesson. Wow, that was a mouthful.

Let me give you some examples of what this means:

Objective for a literature lesson: Students will know and be able to identify 5 characteristics of the main character in the novel To Kill A Mockingbird, by completing a Descriptive Graphic Organizer.

*the "Thinking Skill" is an Analytical Reasoning Skill: Identifying Characteristics (Bloom's). The graphic organizer provides a visual tool for the student.

(I will do more on graphic organizers on Wednesday).

Objective for a math lesson: Students will know and be able to categorize a group of 10 objects according to attributes.

* the "Thinking Skill" is, again, an Analytical Reasoning Skill: Categorizing (Bloom's).

Objective for a social studies lesson: Students will know and be able to brainstorm 8 possible reasons people have migrated to the U.S.A.

*the "Thinking Skill is a Creativity Skill: Brainstorming and a Critical Thinking Skill: Deductive Thinking.

Most lessons have thinking skills embedded within them. Being cognizant of the importance of "Thinking Skills" during planning is essential. You might want to take the opportunity to reflect on previously taught lessons and highlight the "Thinking Skills."

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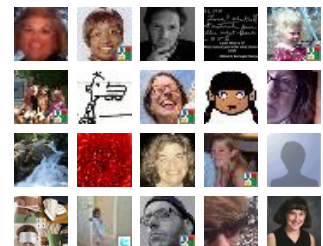
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If you discover that your lessons do not include a "Thinking Skill," it is time to deliberately include them and teach them within your lesson designs. Take a look at the links, included in the first paragraph, to help your thinking.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, become a "Follower."

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Thanks and Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 4:13 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, October 27, 2010

Daily Assignment #16: Forming Groups

It can be a challenge to form groups quickly for various activities. If students are asked to do it on their own they have a tendency to select their friends, of course. Also, there are children who are never picked, for various reasons.

If the teacher selects the groups, the students will blame the teacher if they are in a group they are not happy with. Using the strategies listed below will help to eliminate the blame problem because it is luck of the draw, it has nothing to do with the teacher.

Strategies for forming random groups quickly:

*Numbered Heads--students count off 1-5. All the ones together, all the twos and so on. Or 1,2,3,4,5 makes a group and so on.

*Using a deck of cards have all the aces form a group, kings, queens, jacks or use the numbered cards.

*Use different colored pieces of paper. All the red pieces form a group, greens another, blues, yellows, etc...

▼ 2010 (31)

► [December](#) (6)

► [November](#) (8)

▼ [October](#) (7)

[Daily Assignment #17: Thinking Skills, what are th...](#)

[Daily Assignment #16: Forming Groups](#)

[Daily Assignment #15: Getting Students' Attention ...](#)

[Daily Assignment #14: Facilitating a Parent Confer...](#)

[Daily Assignment #13: Scheduling Parent Conference...](#)

[Daily Assignment #12: Learning Partners](#)

[Daily Assignment #11: Class Newsletter](#)

► [September](#) (7)

► [August](#) (3)

About Me

[linda103](#)

Educator for 34 years. Classroom teacher- grades 1,2,3,5,6.

Educational consultant for 18 years teaching a graduate level course on effective teaching strategies.

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*Plastic animals. There are so many different types you can purchase. Lions form a group, elephants another group, etc...

*Different colored counting bears, unifix cubes, pattern blocks, M&M's (a favorite), all these and many others lend themselves to forming groups.

For pairing students up quickly, these strategies work as well. Using "Old Maid" cards works also. Try to find an "Old Bachelor" deck of cards.

All of these work for K-12. High School students get a kick out of getting plastic animals, counting bears, etc..., as much as the younger students do.

I hope you will experiment with these strategies. Let me know how they work for you and your students.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends and if you haven't already, become a "Follower".

Thank you.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 7:36 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, October 24, 2010

Daily Assignment #15: Getting Students' Attention and Keeping it

We all have so many strategies for getting students' attention and keeping it. It would be great if you could sit with your colleagues and list the many strategies used. Most teachers are not even cognizant of how many strategies they use within a 30 minute block of time.

Here is a list of some attention strategies that I have used and some I know other teachers have used:

- Clapping patterns
- Switching lights on and off
- Hands on head
- Stop and Stare
- Name dropping
- Reprimand
- Voice variety
- Ringing a bell
- Chimes
- Hand signal
- Standing close to disruptive student
- Using a threat
- Removing student
- Knock it off/Stop moves

Whole group: "Okay folks, let's settle down."

Individual: "Richard, you need to focus on our discussion."

Using a student's name in an example

Calling on a student

Music

Being dramatic

Humor

Questions

Make a student a helper, either for the teacher or another student

There are so many more strategies.

After reading the list of strategies above, I hope you will take an opportunity and list strategies you use. Ask a colleague to come in and check off, or write down, which ones you use during a lesson or period. Then reflect on the data. If you find that you are using more "Knock it off" moves than engaging moves, consider this an opportunity to experiment with new more positive strategies to getting student's attention.

I hope you will share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, please become a "Follower."

Thanks so much and Best Effort,

Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 3:59 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, October 20, 2010

Daily Assignment #14: Facilitating a Parent Conference

Let the conferences begin.

Make sure you do your homework before meeting with parents. If you are going to say something, whether it is academic, or a reference to a social behavior, have evidence. I can't stress enough the importance of providing specific examples for whatever you say. Have assessment scores ready for academic references. When sharing social behaviors, good or bad, have specific examples with dates. Be prepared, but don't do a data dumping meeting.

Begin the conference with, "What is your perception of how the beginning of the year is going for your child?" Instantly, you will find out the direction the conference will be taking. You will also discover if the parents have a realistic perception of the child's academic level and social behaviors.

I'm sure you've already heard this, but I'll say it again, share the positives first and then your concerns. Ask questions, e.g. "Who does your child consider his/her friends?" "What does your child do after school?" "Is there anything that I (teacher) should be aware of?"

To bring closure to the meeting, do a summary of the main points and something

that parents can do at home to support their child.

Lastly, take notes. Fill in the details after the parents leave. I discourage taking notes on a computer during the conference. As soon as you put the computer up you have put a barrier between you and the parents. Parents, who have sat through conferences where the teacher took notes on the computer, said they felt the teacher was disconnected and that the clicking was annoying.

If you find that you are not able to cover all the information at this meeting, ask if you can schedule a follow-up meeting.

Relax. Smile. Recognize that this is a partnership. You need the parents to understand and support their child, and you.

I hope you are finding these strategies helpful and will share this blogsite with colleagues and friends.

If you haven't already, please become a "Follower."

Thank you and Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 4:53 PM 2 comments: 

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Sunday, October 17, 2010

Daily Assignment #13: Scheduling Parent Conferences

You have probably started to think about parent conferences. Scheduling is always a challenge. I recognize that schools may have a set way of conducting conferences. However, I would like to share with you a possible strategy for scheduling.

Send a schedule to parents, listing possible dates and times. Each conference requires about 30 minutes each, to do it well. If you have 25 students you should list about 33-35 possible dates and times. It is also considerate to have at least one late afternoon and a few times before school. These should be scheduled over a period of 2 months.

Have the parents select their 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices. Circle the time that fits into the schedule, sign the original copy and send back home. Keep a master copy for yourself. Most teachers do this part through email. Keep in mind not all families have internet or check it frequently.

In the letter to parents explain the process of scheduling. Also, include what will happen if they miss the conference or need to reschedule. If parents miss the conference, and do not call, call them and say, "It is unfortunate that you missed your conference. I hope everything is okay. The next possible times for a conference are... (give 2-3 possible dates and times). Please let me know which one you will be attending."

Daily Assignment #14 will be strategies for conducting a conference.

Please forward this blogsite to colleagues and friends.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at **6:10 PM** **No comments:** 

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Thursday, October 14, 2010

Daily Assignment #12: Learning Partners

Sorry that this blog is late. Life!

I would like to share with you a strategy for establishing Learning Partners in the classroom.

1. Make a large analog clock on a 8-1/2 by 11 sheet of paper, put the hours (no hands or minute lines). Draw a line extending into the center from each hour. At the top of the page have a space for the students to write their name.
2. Have a quick, snappy piece of music to play during this activity.
3. Hand out the sheets of paper and have them write their name at the top. Do not explain the purpose, otherwise they will only get friends to sign their clock.
4. Explain that once the music starts, they are to get up and exchange papers with 12 other people. Example, I would give my clock to Tim and he would put his name at 1:00 and I would put my name at 1:00 on his clock. Then I would find someone else and have them sign another hour and I would need to sign the same hour on their clock. If they already have someone for that hour I would need to skip them and go to someone else. I highly recommend that you model this for your students. If the directions are not clear you will end up with a huge mess. I sure hope what I've written is clear for you.
5. After a few students have finished, stop the music and have everyone sit down.
6. You will need to go over the clock and ask who does not have a partner for each hour. This is very time consuming, but the benefits are worth it. You then start pairing up the remaining students. If you have an extra student they become the substitute or you can create triads. Example: Teacher, "Who does not have a 2:00 partner?" Three students raise their hands. "Okay, Jane you put Regina down for 2:00 and Regina you put down Jane for 2:00." "Linda you will be our substitute or join a pair when we use this strategy."
7. Collect the papers and then explain to the students what the purpose of the clocks will be.
8. Make copies for yourself. (Older students have a tendency to change them or lose them.) Have them keep a copy in their notebook or someplace they can refer to them quickly. If you are a self-contained classroom, post them for quick

reference.

Helpful Hints:

* When you use Learning Partners, always give the directions for the activity before you assign the Learning Partner. If you say which Learning Partner it is first, the students will focus on that person and not the directions for the activity.

* Whenever you want to pair students together you should say, "Make eye contact with your 3:00 partner. Go to them. That is who you will be working with today." Making eye contact first helps them to go to that person. Otherwise, they may not get there.

* Make a note to yourself that you used the 3:00 partner so you won't use it the next time. You'll never remember on your own, trust me. It will also eliminate the students complaining about always having to work with the same person.

* You do not have to use a clock pattern for setting up partners. You can use content related designs. For example, I used geometric shapes--rhombus, trapezoid and hexagon. I would say, " make eye contact with your rhombus partner." In this way, I was teaching the shapes, as well as pairing students. Some teachers have used U.S. states--"make eye contact with your Florida partner." Another one might be continents, or parts of a plant, water cycle, famous artist or musicians. The list is endless.

I hope you find this helpful. If you have any questions about this strategy, or any of the previous ones, just ask.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues. The more the better.

Best Effort,

Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 5:22 AM 1 comment: 

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Sunday, October 10, 2010

Daily Assignment #11: Class Newsletter

If you are reading this, welcome back. I appreciate your interest and support.

Let's begin-----

A great way to communicate with parents on a weekly basis, and to have students reflect on major events each week, is to establish a weekly class newsletter. You're probably asking, "How on earth do I fit this into an already busy day?" Believe it or not, it can be very easy.

First, ask for parent volunteers. It doesn't have to be the same parent each week, but it does need to be on a consistent day and time. I've had one parent take on this responsibility for the whole year. I've also had 2, and some years 4 parents, share this responsibility. When it's more than one parent, have them work out the weekly schedule among themselves.

Second, rotating through a class list, select 4 students a week to become reporters. Generating topics with the whole group helps to refresh everyone's memory. With the parent, the students select one topic each to write about. I restricted the topics to events within our class. That is to say, it couldn't be about events in their personal life or at recess or during specialist times. I also had the parent work with the students outside the classroom, e.g. hallway, cafeteria, library.

Third, you, the classroom teacher, should write a message to the parents. It should include upcoming events, important information, e.g. thank you to all the reporters and the parent, progress within units of study, etc...

Fourth, the parent puts the newsletter together and makes all the copies. Remember to provide the parents with a model of what the final newsletter should look like.

You did it! And, you have created a strategy to involve parents in a non-threatening way.

If you like this strategy and all the others, I hope you will share this blogsite with other colleagues and become a follower.

On Wednesday I will share a strategy for establishing Learning Partners.

Thank you for your support.
Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 6:01 PM No comments: 

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